



The cast of the Gurnet Theatre Project's production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* takes a break from rehearsing at the Myles Standish Monument on Sunday afternoon. This is the largest cast since the Project made its debut at the monument last summer with a performance of *The Illusion*.

Much Ado About Gurnet Theatre Project

By MORAG MACLACHLAN

While the majority of people scrambling up the stairs toward the Myles Standish Monument are tourists ready to climb to the structure's top, about 20 visitors this past Sunday were locals heading past the statue to the outdoor stage.

The cast of the Gurnet Theatre Project's production of William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* has been rehearsing the play every Monday through Thursday night and Sunday afternoons. GTP presented its first production, *The Illusion*, written by Pierre Corneille and later adapted by Tony Kushner, at the monument last August. The Project has come full circle as the group of local thespians presents its second free performance on Standish Shore one year later.

"*Much Ado About Nothing* is my favorite play by Shakespeare," director Kristen Schnibbe said. Schnibbe of Tremont Street is a senior at Skidmore College majoring in theater with a concentration in directing.

Much Ado About Nothing is a romantic comedy with two parallel love stories. Nicholas Combs and Sarah El-Amine of Crescent Street play Benedick and Beatrice. El-Amine said Benedick is her character's arch nemesis, but friends tell Benedick that Beatrice is secretly harboring a deep love for him and Beatrice is told the same story about Benedick.

"I play a self-righteous, charming feminist that swears she will never fall in love with a man," El-Amine, a newcomer to the GTP, said. "But then I am tricked into believing Benedick loves me. Our fighting turns into mean flirting and love under false premises."

The second love story is between Claudio, played by Duxbury's Cameron Gosselin, and Hero, played by Bianca Walters of Trout Farm Road.

"Claudio falls in love with Hero. But Don Jon tries to sab-

otage their wedding by claiming that Hero is not a virgin," Walters said.

This is Walters' first production with GTP. She studies theater at the College of Santa Fe in New Mexico. She and another GTP first timer, Carter Satterfield of Wellington Lane, were approached by Schnibbe to audition for *Much Ado About Nothing*.

"Bianca and I were in Springfest and Kristen asked us to audition," Satterfield, who plans on studying business at Penn. State, said. Satterfield was cast as Constable Dogberry.



Director Kristen Schnibbe of Tremont Street works with Nicholas Combs, who plays one of the lead male roles of Benedick.

Rebecca Richards of Autumn Avenue said she saw a flyer about auditions for the production and decided to try out. She landed a part alongside fellow Duxbury High School Thespian Troop 335 actress Jessica Bartlett. Bartlett of Forest Street played in *Scenes at Sunset* and as Alcandre, a powerful wizard, in *The Illusion* last summer. She said her character Margaret in *Much Ado About Nothing* is quite a different role.

"Margaret is used to make it look like Hero is cheating on her fiancé," Bartlett said. "I

like playing different roles. It would get boring to play the same type of character."

Last summer, Schnibbe played one of the lead roles in *The Illusion*. She directed the GTP's *Scenes at Sunset* dinner theater at the Senior Center earlier this year. Schnibbe said while she enjoys acting, directing is her passion.

"I love when you see a spark in someone at an audition and then you watch them flourish as an actor during the production," Schnibbe said. "I have a vision when I'm directing and as rehearsals continue, I like to see others begin to share that vision."

Schnibbe's vision is infectious. Bartlett performed in *The Illusion* alongside Schnibbe and says the switch to being directed by her in *Scenes at Sunset* and *Much Ado About Nothing* was an enjoyable transition.

"I know her style," Bartlett, who heads to the University of Vermont this fall, said. "She's easy-going."

"She's great. I couldn't ask for a better director," said Satterfield, who leaves for Pennsylvania two days after the production closes.

With a cast of 22 thespians, *Much Ado About Nothing* is the GTP's largest production yet. El-Amine enjoys working with a large cast, especially with actors and actresses of varying backgrounds.

"Some people are theater majors and some people, like me, are not," El-Amine said. "This is my first time doing theater since high school, but working with theater majors makes me work harder."

The play opens on Thursday, Aug. 10 at 5 p.m. and will be performed nightly until Sunday, Aug. 13. The production runs about two hours and does feature an intermission. The audience is encouraged to bring blankets, chairs and a picnic dinner. For more information, log on to www.gurnetheatreproject.com.